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2007-05857/

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007FOR0161-001387
Oct. 29, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range

NEW ACTION PLAN SHIFTS COASTAL FOREST INDUSTRY

VICTORIA – A new Coastal Forest Action Plan, backed by $21 million, will help achieve government's vision for a competitive coastal forest sector that contributes to prosperous communities, First Nations, stable employment and sustainable forest practices, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman said today.

"The plan outlines actions government and industry are taking to strengthen the Coastal forest sector," said Coleman. "Shifting to more second-growth harvesting provides stability and sustainability, and improving log export policies will help keep logs in British Columbia, supporting local communities."

Since 1995, the proportion of old-growth harvested on the Coast has declined from 95 per cent of the harvest to 71 per cent, reflecting the increase in the amount of old growth being protected.

"There is no quick fix for the challenges facing the coastal forest sector, but I believe the actions outlined in this plan will help us regain our competitive edge," said Rick Jeffery, president and CEO of the Coast Forest Products Association. "The plan was formed through a collaborative process with key stakeholders, and I'm particularly excited about the research and development into maximizing returns from hemlock."

"Our government is working with the Province of British Columbia and the B.C. coastal forest industry to revitalize that sector," said the Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources. "Through NRCan's Transformative Technologies Program, $991,500 is being provided to FPInnovations to apply innovative science and technology to expand the economic opportunities for the B.C. coastal forest sector."

Effective Feb. 1, 2008, the log export fee in the southern coastal region will be linked to the softwood lumber export tax, so that logs and lumber leaving British Columbia are subject to an equivalent export charge. It is expected that this linkage will reduce the incentive to export logs to the U.S. when the lumber export tax is high.

Currently, up to 35 per cent of logs can be exported from the northwest and the mid-coast timber supply areas to support local employment because logging costs are high and there are few manufacturing facilities. This policy will be expanded to include the Queen Charlotte Islands.

"The TLA is encouraged by the direction that the minister has undertaken with the release of the Coastal Forest Action Plan," said Dave Lewis, executive director of the Truck Loggers Association. "We look forward to continuing to work with him on issues that are of critical importance to our industry."

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The Coastal Forest Action Plan:

- Enhances the shift to second-growth harvest;
- Encourages the harvest of hardwoods like alder, birch, cottonwood and maple;
- Uses science and technology to develop markets for hemlock and balsam;
- Promotes the value-added sector;
- Supports a competitive pulp and paper sector;
- Improves the viability of First Nations' tenures;
- Examines options to provide land use certainty; and
- Streamlines administrative processes like timber marking.

The coastal forest industry directly employs 12,000 workers and generates $250 million in revenue to provincial and local governments.

For more information, or to download a copy of the plan, visit www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/coastalplan online.

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2 backgrounder(s) attached.

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